

What Lessons Do Children Learn When They Grow Up in Abusive Families?

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1. Violence works - solution to problems, not a problem in and of itself.
2. The safest place for me (the child) is in the arms of the abusive parent.
3. Power is hierarchical and coercive.
4. Abuse and violence reinforce power.
5. Fear is the emotion that permeates a relationship and governs the interactions.
6. Learn to react, not initiate.
7. Intensity determines recognition - difficulty recognizing low-level emotions.
8. Learn to focus on the weaknesses of others - cues to survival in their own families of origin often lay in personal weaknesses, not strengths.
9. Learn negative and rigid gender roles and identification.
10. Gentleness, compassion, empathy are signs of weakness.